

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1-27. (Canceled)

28. (Previously presented) The network photographic service system of claim 63, wherein management of the transaction includes calculating the cost to be paid to each laboratory for storing the digital image data, or the communication charge for the digital image data.

29. (Previously presented) The network photographic service system of claim 63, wherein the center server charges the customer based on a result related to the management of the transaction.

30-48. (Canceled).

49. (Previously presented) A network photograph service method, comprising:
providing a plurality of photo-finishing laboratories, each including a laboratory server in which picture images have been stored, and a single center server installed in a service center in which picture images as image data whose resolution is lower than the resolution of the picture images stored in the laboratories have been stored;

making the digital image data stored in the center server accessible on the network;
selecting one photo-finishing laboratory out of said plurality of photo-finishing laboratories to output a print in response to order information transferred from a customer via the network; and

providing the printing service requested in the order by transmitting instruction information to the laboratory server installed in the selected photo-finishing laboratory, thereby enabling the customer to select a desired photo-finishing laboratory out of a plurality of photo-finishing laboratories to perform the printing service,

wherein the center server stores the digital image data in correlation with storage location information showing the laboratory server in which the image data is stored as high resolution image data, and selects, upon selection of the photo-finishing laboratory to output the print, the

photo-finishing laboratory in which the laboratory server stores the high resolution image data of the picture image whose print has been ordered, based on the storage location information.

50. (Previously Presented) The network photograph service method as defined in claim 49, wherein the center server further includes:

recording the processing instructed to each laboratory server by transmitting the instruction information, and managing a transaction occurring between the photo finishing laboratories and/or between the center server and each photo finishing laboratory, based on the record.

51-52. (Canceled)

53. (Previously Presented) The network photograph service method as defined in claim 49, wherein said center server further comprises:

judging whether or not processing for the requested printing service requires special equipment when assigning the selected photo-finishing laboratory to output the order print, and, if the processing requires special equipment, said center server selecting a special photo-finishing laboratory to output the print, instead of the photo-finishing laboratory which stores the high resolution image data for outputting the ordered print.

54. (Previously Presented) The network photograph service method as defined in claim 53, further comprising:

transferring to the special photo-finishing laboratory information indicating the photo-finishing laboratory that is storing the high resolution image data for outputting the ordered print as order information.

55-62. (Canceled)

63. (Previously presented) A network photograph service system comprising:
a plurality of photo-finishing laboratories, each including a laboratory server; and
a single center server installed in a service center, which receives a printing service order via a network, wherein the center server selects one photo-finishing laboratory out of said plurality of photo-finishing laboratories to output a print in response to order information transferred from a customer via the network, and provides the printing service requested in the order by transmitting instruction information to the laboratory server installed in the selected photo-finishing laboratory, thereby enabling the customer to select a desired photo-finishing laboratory out of a plurality of photo-finishing laboratories to perform the printing service,
wherein the center server maintains a record of processing instructed for each laboratory server by transmitting the instruction information, and manages a transaction occurring between the photo-finishing laboratories and/or between the center server and each photo-finishing laboratory, based on the record.

64. (Previously presented) A network photograph service system as defined in claim 63, wherein each laboratory server stores picture images as image data; and
wherein the center server stores picture images as the image data in correlation with storage location information showing the laboratory server in which the image data is stored, and selects, upon selection of the photo-finishing laboratory to output the print, the photo-finishing laboratory in which the laboratory server stores the picture image whose print has been ordered, based on the storage location information.

65. (Canceled)

66. (Previously Presented) The network photographic service system of claim 63, wherein said order information is sent from a personal computer of the customer to the center server via the network.

67-68. (Canceled)